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175 643 661 ● [1037] such an example of rigor might spread. The moral element of the population had long looked askance at his libertinage; his first act upon entering a town during a visit of state was regularly to have his aides select for him the most attractive females in the vicinity, with whom he would spend more time than at the business of governing. Not even his army was sorrowful over his death. He had let his loyal troops go for months without pay, and then, reviewing a group of them one day, taunted and railed at them for their ragged uniforms. "You look as naked as a bunch of old bottles!" he cried.

Dessalines had restored order to his country and had founded a state. Both achievements rested upon a display of force which inspired cringing fear and denied normal human aspirations. His entire social and economic order was based upon the subservience of the many to the few.

2. *Christophe* (*1807–1820*)

175 178 Until 1807 all Haitians had the same political background—the French colonial régime, revolution, the governorship of Toussaint, and the stern rule of Dessalines. Now the common path forked. Two avenues were opened up during the next dozen years, one by Christophe, the other by his Southern and mulatto rival, Pétion. The former was the road of discipline, hard work, and feudal control; the latter was one of persuasion, *laissez faire*, and small properties. Haiti ultimately chose the second.

175 643 642 662 The logical successor to Dessalines was his powerful Negro henchman, Christophe.[8] This black general felt so certain of his leadership that he did not even bother to attend the *Assemblée Constituante* which was to choose the new head of state. The mulattoes, however, had agreed among themselves that they had had enough of rule by ignorant ex-slaves. They consequently performed the very skillful manoeuvre of preparing a constitution which should effectively shear a new president of dictatorial power; this done, they dutifully elected Christophe to the presidential office. The wrathful general peremptorily declined to rule by virtue of so anaemic a document, and led his army southward to demand proper respect for his august

8. The name Christophe was taken from the English Caribbean island of St. Christopher, on which this black slave was born. Later in life he took as his first name Henry, spelling it in the English fashion rather than the French, as an indication of his wholehearted admiration of English people and English ways.

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The result was entirely different from Boyer's expectations. As a French critic graphically puts it, the Haitians

> who had never had more than a borrowed energy—that inspired by fear of French invasion—when they saw themselves freed, by a solemn treaty, from all attack on their coasts, seemed to allow their arms to drop relaxed at their sides, saying, *Let's take a rest.* The soldier who up till now had squeezed his body into a uniform and had subjected himself to European discipline, shouldering his arms, staring straight ahead as if seeing nothing, now began to leave unbuttoned the uniform which choked him, dragged a mattress into his sentry-box so that he might sleep through his watch, and let his cross slip to the earth never to pick it up again.[44]

In short, the Haitian army as a disciplined force ceased to exist, and with it all authority of its officers. Boyer had counted upon the army to enforce the provisions of the Code Rural, but now a soldier's life was a paid sinecure. By gaining political security Haiti had inadvertently lost its last chance of economic prosperity through a system of forced labor.

Wherever the Code was put into partial operation, revenue from plantations continued to decline. The price of real estate dropped proportionately. It was a simple matter for workmen who had signed contracts to avoid carrying out their stipulations, and just as simple to evade the law requiring fifteen acres' minimum for a single holding. Practically every Haitian wanted to own a bit of land; once he had acquired his bit, however small, he had (or so he felt) earned an exemption from directed labor.

Only on estates near the few big towns, where government officials were concentrated, was there much pretense of trying to enforce the Code. Sentries at the gates of Port-au-Prince were authorized to confiscate plantains, yams, or fruit brought by any worker who, in contravention of the Code, had strayed to market on a forbidden day, but sentries soon acquired the habit of not seeing countryfolk who passed the gates. Reports kept cropping up that rural policemen were robbing poor cultivators of their coffee under pretense of protecting them from the penalties for breach of the law; this suggests that the Code was used rather for graft than for the stimulation of agriculture.

By and large, however, the Code was merely ignored. Agents could not be found who were willing to stand in any community

44. Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue*, II, 181.

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643 and being the personal property of the monarch and recipients of his
701 royal favor, were to constitute the perpetual support of his throne.
625 Only four thousand of these compulsory immigrants came, but
625 Christophe made them into very effective companies of police, whom he named the Royal Dahomets from the country of their origin. They performed the duties of a gendarmerie in all the districts of the North, drove the cultivators to their labors, watched over property and the security of the proprietors, and maintained industry and a strict subordination among all ranks of people in the kingdom.

175 Christophe's regular troops were well clothed and armed. They
701 were kept under stern discipline, no mercy or relaxation being
[703] shown them; delinquency on their part brought flagellation or a military execution. The troops received only a nominal stipend, and each soldier was required to gain his subsistence by cultivating a few acres of ground allotted to him out of the national domain. The usual quarter of this income had, of course, to be turned over as a tax to the state. Although the King's power was maintained by soldiers, he never coddled them. "The soldiers of the army as well as the laborers of the plantations lived in perpetual dread of the rod of authority," wrote Brown.[14] They seem to have developed a tradition of some special fetish power possessed by Christophe, a sort of *mana*, to use anthropological terminology. Even princes and dukes were chastised by the King's orders, and then made to do menial work by way of further punishment.

Conditions in the republic of Pétion were similar and yet different —similar in that soldiers formed the support of the government, different in that Pétion did not rule by fear. Every individual man between 16 and 60, a few cultivators excepted, was required by law to be a soldier, either in the *corps solde* (regular troops of the line), or in the *corps non solde* (national guard). The former, both under Pétion and in the early days of Boyer, had about 40,000 men distributed in strong detachments in towns and communes all over the
[9114] country. Their costume, instead of being neat, uniform, and daily inspected as with Christophe's army, was ragged and mismated; they
[465] managed according to popular parlance "to find linen on every
[541] hedge." They were paid from fifty cents to a dollar a month, ac-
[512] cording to the existing solvency or exigency of the state. Each week end a parade and review was held, and then a small fatigue party was taken to do actual duty, the others being dismissed until the next

14. *Op. cit.*, II, 209.

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Saturday to use their time cultivating the soil, pursuing some mechanical craft, or acting as day laborers.

It must be once more emphasized that the civil was everywhere subservient to the military power. The administration of justice in tribunals was carried out only at the pleasure of the army chiefs. No person would have dared bring suit against a high officer; the only efficacious way of obtaining justice against petty offenders was through summary decision and corporal chastisement by the commanding officer.

By the close of Boyer's rule, during which he had kept the army up to its full numbers while pursuing a policy of economy, the outward appearance of the troops was almost ludicrous. They appeared at review wearing generally what pleased them or what they could scrape together, for they had to supply their own clothing and arms. The only effectual employment of the soldiery was as armed police, for Haiti never had to fight external powers. The soldiers drummed and fifed, mustered on parade and went through the formations, but otherwise merely stood (or sat) sentry at the doors of public offices, hunted up at the command of the magistrates *les mauvais sujets*, guarded prisons and prisoners on chain-gang duty, loitered at barriers, collected tolls, and examined permits.

A large army, practically idle, could easily be seduced into the support of revolutionary movements. Principles of discipline and loyalty current in European armies of the day were nonexistent in nineteenth-century Haiti. The numbers in the army varied from twenty to forty or fifty thousand. A strange estimate was made for the year 1867: 6,500 general officers and staff; 7,000 regimental officers; and only 6,500 soldiers.[15] It was said that "*tout Haïtien qui n'était pas général de division était au moins soldat.*" The higher grades became rewards for political service; the lower ranks had to be filled up by recruiting parties—when these were abroad, all men who did not desire a period of enforced leisure away from home remained in hiding.

While the army was not alone responsible for the tragedies of insurrection and mismanagement which consistently befell the country, it was never uninvolved in these misfortunes. Only the radical reforms undertaken by the American Occupation saved modern Haiti from continued military domination.

15. Sir Spenser St. John, *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, p. 310.

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712 the battlements far off across the tortuous mass of mountains and
[713] green valleys, admire the sheer strength of will which made His Majesty's subjects bear four hundred cannon up the steep and rocky path—not to mention thousands of cannon balls now rusting away after a century of disuse, or the powder and shot which once filled
[173] the magazines. It is said that five thousand soldiers could be housed in the fortress at once. If this is hyperbole, one hardly dare challenge
● [703] it, for the whole Citadel belittles the individual man. It is likewise said that Christophe once made a battalion of soldiers march off the cliff to their death merely to demonstrate his absolute control over
[766] them. Such stories grow up around His Black Majesty. He lies entombed in his useless but still superb fortress—and lives in the memory of the Northerners, one of whom said proudly: "We of the North have a great heritage, and you will find that we are all dominated by *une psychologie citadelienne.*"

Dungeons, secret passages, royal apartments, separate rooms for each of the old Dutch, Spanish, French, and English cannon, some of them dating back to the seventeenth century—all the paraphernalia of the storybook fortress is present. From a bastion one gazes, as from an alp, for miles in any direction, and feels that La Ferrière is certainly one of the most impressive, and one of the most futile, edifices in the world. If the silent cannon had ever been fired, their balls would have rumbled harmlessly down the mountainside. The suspicion grows that Christophe achieved his architectural miracle not primarily as a defense against the French, but to make his subjects proud of what a nation of despised ex-slaves could accomplish.

344 Five miles away, at the foot of the mountain, is the village of
644 Milot, with the ruins of the palace of Sans Souci. Of yellow stone, it spreads out spaciously like a French château. Its rooms must have been magnificent. The palace is so situated that one may look out across the northern plains to the sea, or up the valleys to mountain peaks. In Sans Souci Christophe shot himself in 1820 when he knew that only *souci* would remain to him if he lived.

489 Transportation from one part of the country to another is far from
[496] easy. There are no railroads—unless one counts the short line running north a few miles from Port-au-Prince to nowhere in particular, and the equally short line coming west into Cap-Haïtien from the fields
[491] of the northern plain. Roads built by the American Marines make automobile travel between the main towns possible, if one does not